

RED RIVER VALLEY WATER SUPPLY PROJECT
Technical Team Meeting
September 9-10, 2002
Fargo, North Dakota

Introductions and Welcome

Dennis Breitzman, Area Manager of the Dakotas Area Office, welcomed all to the meeting and each attendee introduced himself or herself (see attached sign-in sheet). D. Breitzman explained that he is the technical lead for this project and Karl Wirkus, Deputy Regional Director for the Great Plains Region, is the policy lead.

Policy Forum Overview

D. Breitzman explained that on August 20, 2002 Reclamation and the Garrison Diversion Conservancy District (GDCCD) hosted a public policy forum meeting to discuss policy issues. Reclamation has been reevaluating the organization of this project to more accurately reflect direction provided in DWRA. A new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has been drafted which will supercede the MOU signed in July 2000. The new draft MOU was provided to those attending the policy forum meeting. Comments have been received and are being considered. Signature on this new MOU is anticipated in the near future. Signatories will be Reclamation and the GDCCD, representing the State of North Dakota.

The project will result in two separate products:

- 1) the Needs and Options Report – Reclamation is the sole lead in this effort as directed by language in DWRA.
- 2) an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) which will be prepared jointly by Reclamation and the GDCCD as co-leads. This also follows direction in DWRA.

Operating Principles have been drafted for each of these efforts. These documents describe the process and procedures that will be followed in the completion of the products. Copies were made available at the policy forum and to all attendees at this meeting and to the upcoming Study Review Team meeting. Comments on these documents are welcome and should be sent to Karl Wirkus by September 20, 2002.

The draft Operating Principles for the Needs and Options Report reaffirms the study process and continues involvement of the Technical Team and the Study Review Team. Draft Operating Principles for the EIS, in part, describes the formation of an Interdisciplinary Team and the process of identifying Cooperating Agencies that will play key roles in the development of the EIS. The joint leads are discussing who should be invited to participate as a cooperating agency.

Gene Reetz asked how the Needs and Options Report and the EIS processes are going to interact with each other. D. Breitzman deferred the answer until after a presentation of the EIS, because there is a graphic in the presentation that describes the interaction.

Paul Stolen asked how everyone can be assured use of objectivity of the EIS process if GDCC is a co-lead. D. Breitzman referred to a previous response Dave Koland gave to this very same question at the policy forum. Also, in accordance with the law of National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), this will be an open and public process. Policy related questions like this one will be noted and discussed at policy forum meetings which will be held periodically. Please submit policy related questions to Karl Wirkus at kwirkus@gp.usbr.gov.

Neil Stessman concurred with the idea of holding periodic policy forums and requested that Reclamation distribute all comments that have been received on the draft Needs and Options Report Operating Principles. D. Breitzman agreed to this.

Several presentations were given throughout the course of this meeting. Handouts of each presentation were available at the meeting. Copies of these handouts can be obtained by contacting Signe Snortland.

Needs and Options Update – presented by Signe Snortland

The Needs and Options Report will be prepared by Reclamation as the sole lead. Each aspect of the study is described in a Specific Plan of Study (SPOS). This study will build off previous Reclamation studies of the Red River Valley (Phase I A and B, and Phase II). P. Stolen asked what the study area is and are they different for the Needs and Options Report and the EIS. D. Breitzman response was that the language in DWRA is contradictory and we are having discussions internally to refine our interpretation. At this point, Reclamation is leaning toward three different scopes. When defining the needs we will look at the needs in North Dakota. When identifying and evaluating options to meet the needs we will look at the entire Red River Valley. The EIS process will look at all affected areas. N. Stessman also noted the inconsistencies within DWRA. K. Wirkus stated that Reclamation needs to articulate our interpretation of this soon in a policy statement. The Regional Director has indicated a policy memo defining the study area is forthcoming.

Needs SPOS Update – presented by Dean Karsky and Ryan Newman

D. Karsky reiterated that Reclamation will be evaluating needs in North Dakota building from information presented in previous studies. This effort will focus on water quality more than the previous studies did. He reviewed the steps in the SPOS. Reclamation will be working with the State Water Commission to host water user meetings throughout the Red River Valley in North Dakota the week of October 7. The intent of these meetings is to provide potential water users with information about this project, get water use data from them, and let them know how they can be involved in the process. Reclamation will also be developing population projections in association with determining the municipal, rural, and industrial needs. In previous meetings of this team, Reclamation also committed to having other independent sources prepare population projections to establish a range.

R. Newman reviewed work associated with identifying the aquatic needs. Members of this group have participated in meetings to develop methodologies for assessing aquatic needs and instream flows. This effort will address microhabitat and macro-habitat. Field work was initiated in April and was restricted to the Sheyenne and Red Rivers.

R. Newman also presented information on evaluation of recreation needs. Reclamation will rely on existing information to assess this need.

G. Reetz asked if Reclamation was considering tribal needs within the study area. D. Karsky noted that several tribes have been invited to participate in the study process but so far have not indicated any needs.

Joe Engeln asked if we are going to consider the costs associated with meeting the identified needs. D. Karsky responded that this type of information will be developed and included. Information on costs (based upon the Phase II report) will be presented at upcoming water user meetings.

Steve Burian asked if looking at needs out to the year 2050 is looking far enough and how was it determined that 2050 was the endpoint. In previous studies the year 2050 was established and we are building from there so this endpoint was maintained.

P. Stolen pointed out that Minnesota DNR provided numerous comments on the previous Red River Valley studies and he wants to ensure that the public is aware of this information. His understanding is that Reclamation previously agreed to provide this information to the public. This information is not on the displays at the back of the meeting room and should be. D. Karsky responded that we are preparing an issue panel for future displays that will summarize issues raised by environmental groups and the states of Minnesota and Missouri and Canada. Comments that anyone has on the display panels are welcome. Chuck Fritz paraphrased P. Stolen's comment and explained that issues raised in the earlier studies should be made available to the public because information in these comments may affect their future estimated need. D. Breitzman stated that Reclamation will provide the information to the public.

Hydrology SPOS – presented by Amy Lieb

A. Lieb summarized the purpose of the hydrology studies and how the SPOS is organized. She provided a summary of each section within the SPOS and stated that Reclamation is looking for input on criteria used in the selection of hydrology models. Reclamation will select the models. Work has started on tasks in Hydrology 3 and Hydrology 4. Reclamation will initiate work on tasks within Hydrology 1 soon. Model selection criteria will be the main focus of discussion in the hydrology break out session.

S. Burian noted that a 30-day low flow does not represent the available streamflow with sufficient detail to identify accurate shortages and asked if Reclamation would consider using a 7-day low flow instead for this study. A. Lieb stated that Reclamation has considered this issue and is considering using a daily time step for a separate modeling effort which would use data from a more recent drought period, possibly the late 1980s, to refine shortages incurred by water users. S. Burian also asked if we are going to account for water needs of small communities off the main tributaries of the Red River. A. Lieb responded that the needs of small communities will be accounted for, either through the basin-wide water availability modeling or through individual studies of communities.

G. Reetz asked if we are addressing the possibility of a Devils Lake outlet. A. Lieb pointed out that we intend to model with and without the Devils Lake outlet(s).

Engineering SPOS – presented by Darrin Goetzfried

D. Goetzfried reviewed the purpose of this SPOS and major sections in it. He discussed new features under consideration that have been developed by Reclamation. A water conservation potential assessment, information on the No Action alternative, and information on feature cost estimating were included. Tasks included in Engineering 1.1.1, 1.1.2, and 1.2 will begin soon.

Terry Ellsworth asked whether new features being considered could happen without this project. D. Goetzfried indicated that many of these features could happen without this project.

Financial SPOS – presented by Dean Karsky

D. Karsky asked that members of this group to review and comment on this SPOS since this is the first time it has been presented. He provided a review of financial assumptions that were part of the Phase II study and noted that this study will use the same assumptions. He provided a handout of costs that were presented in the Phase II report. These are the same figures, just presented in a different format.

S. Burian asked if some of the embedded costs shown in this handout are the federal portion. Tim Keller responded that some of the alternatives have a cost that would go above the current federal ceiling but this was not used as a constraint for this table. N. Stessman asked which ceiling T. Keller was referring to. T. Keller responded that the ceiling established by DWRA for the Red River Valley is \$200 million.

P. Stolen asked if negative effects from depletions in the Missouri River were accounted for and that they may outweigh incidental benefit in the Sheyenne River. The EIS will address ecological affects and analyze foreseeable depletion of Missouri River.

A breakout session for this SPOS is not scheduled for this meeting but may be at future Technical Team meetings if there is an interest. Tim Keller will chair this subgroup.

Biota SPOS – presented by Rick Nelson and Dr. Greg Linder

Rick Nelson noted this is a new SPOS and the purpose of this study is to assess the risk and consequences of biota transfer. Reclamation has entered into an interagency agreement with USGS to have Dr. Greg Linder of their Biological Resources Division at the Columbia Environmental Research Center conduct this assessment.

Dr. Linder identified some of the staff that he will be working with in this effort. He discussed the difference between a ‘risk analysis’, ‘risk assessment’, and ‘risk management’. A draft list of species of concern has been developed which includes invasive species and other biota of concern. This assessment will be conducted using existing data. All data will be reviewed for quantity and quality. The study report will go through an internal peer review by USGS staff in addition to a review by Reclamation and others as appropriate.

S. Snortland noted that copies of the Jay Lietch report *Science and Policy: Interbasin Water Transfer of Aquatic Biota* are available on the back table.

EIS – presented by Signe Snortland

As directed by DWRA, this EIS will be prepared jointly by Reclamation and the GDCD. She summarized the steps in the EIS process highlighting things such as conducting a Missouri River depletion study, looking at all affected areas, and describing how the Needs and Options Report will interact with the EIS. The current scoping distribution list has over 1000 entities. A public involvement plan is being prepared. The purpose and need statement is being refined. The evaluation of alternatives will include inbasin and inter-basin alternatives.

P. Stolen requested that Reclamation send a copy of the letter received from Minnesota Department of Natural Resources stating their support of investigating water sources within Minnesota to Technical Team members. Reclamation will do this.

N. Stessman asked at what point will Reclamation consult with Canada. S. Snortland indicated that Canadian agencies are observing the process for now. D. Breitzman reaffirmed that consultation with Canada is necessary but the process and timing hasn't been determined. N. Stessman wanted clarification on whether environmental effects will be addressed under the EIS or the Needs and Options Report process. S. Snortland responded that this will occur as part of the EIS.

P. Stolen raised a concern about biota risk assessment focusing on economic effects instead of the ecological effects. R. Nelson responded that the assessment will look at both the ecological and economic impacts. Further discussions on this can be continued during the breakout session.

G. Reetz pointed out that some alternatives considered in the EIS may require a 404 permit from the Corps of Engineers and wondered if this has been addressed. S. Snortland said it will be discussed during consultations with federal agencies.

Public Scoping for the EIS – presented by Dick McCabe

D. McCabe summarized the intent of public scoping and the process. Reclamation will be responsible for maintaining the Administrative Record for the EIS. Public scoping meetings will be held during the last week of October and the first week of November. Specific dates, times, and locations are included in the handout and will be published in the Notice of Intent.

Closing Statements (for first day)– presented by Dennis Breitzman

Breakout sessions will be held for the Needs SPOS, Hydrology SPOS and the Biota SPOS. S. Burian requested a future breakout session for engineering and financial aspects of the study. This will be considered for the next meeting of the Technical Team. J. Engeln suggested combining the Needs and Financial groups at some time in the future and this will be considered as well.

Feedback from Breakout Sessions

The following notes are a summary of the discussions that occurred during the breakout sessions on the Needs, Hydrology, and Biota SPOS. For more detail on these discussions please refer to the breakout session notes attached to these meeting minutes.

Needs SPOS – presented by Dean Karsky

Comments on this SPOS are due by September 27, 2002. Please send them to Signe Snortland.

The main topics in this breakout session were:

- ⌘ How do we address and account for water needs of communities within the study area that have a population less than 500? These will be considered. Reclamation would appreciate input from others that were not able to participate in the needs breakout session.
- ⌘ How will we conduct the population projections? Reclamation will use in-house expertise to do one projection and seek other projections from the State demographer and communities within the study area.
- ⌘ Discussed the difficulty of doing an accurate projection of water needs for the target year of 2050. Most communities only plan 5-10 years into the future. Reclamation will provide the best estimate possible using current analytical methods.

Hydrology SPOS – presented by Amy Lieb

Comments on this SPOS are due by September 27, 2002. Please send them to Signe Snortland.

The main topics in this breakout session were:

- ⌘ Reviewed sections within the SPOS
- ⌘ The majority of this session focused on selection criteria being developed for the water quantity and quality models. Some criteria were based on discussion from previous meetings of this group. Since that time, other sources were used to expand the list of criteria and to develop a matrix display. The criteria have been sorted into four main categories which are water rights, functionality, operational, and information technology. The criteria matrix is attached to these meeting minutes. The matrix will be updated based on input from this meeting.
- ⌘ Reclamation is looking for additional input on the water quality criteria. This will probably be the focus of the next breakout session or accomplished via a conference call.

Aquatic Needs and Biota SPOS – presented by Ryan Newman

Comments on the Biota SPOS are due by October 15, 2002. Please send them to Signe Snortland. The main topics of this breakout session were:

- ⌘ Questions about what has been done in relation to gathering data on the aquatic needs, the methods used and field work done this summer were summarized. This subgroup will reconvene when the draft report is completed to discuss the report layout and other comments.
- ⌘ The group discussed comments on the Biota SPOS that were brought up earlier in the Technical Team meeting. This SPOS is in the development phase and any comments would be appreciated. Members of this group were asked to provide any additional 'species of interest'.

Final Meeting Comments or Questions – led by Dennis Breitzman

Jeffrey Mattern asked what the next step would be for this project. Response was to review and comment on the SPOs, review and comment on the draft Operating Principles, and then meet again in mid-November.

T. Ellsworth asked when the notes from this meeting would be available for review. Reclamation will try to get them out in one week, two weeks at the latest.

P. Stolen asked what topics were going to be covered at the Study Review Team meeting scheduled for this afternoon. We will be presenting the same topics covered at this meeting only not in as much technical detail and there will not be breakout sessions. Meeting minutes are taken at these meetings as well and can be shared with everyone.

N. Stessman encouraged Reclamation to err on the side of broad distribution of information relative to this project.

P. Stolen noted that there are still outstanding policy issues that need to be addressed before some of the technical work can move forward. D. Breitzman agreed in part but said technical work need not stop until all policy issues are resolved.

N. Stessman would like to have copies of comments Reclamation has received on the draft Operating Principles and MOU distributed prior to the next policy forum. Reclamation agreed to try and schedule a policy forum within the next few weeks.

Reclamation Action Items

- ☞ Notify everyone of the specifics for another Technical Team meeting in mid-November.
- ☞ Attempt to schedule another policy forum within the next few weeks. Policy related issues raised at this meeting have been noted and other issues should be sent to Karl Wirkus.
- ☞ Comments that have been received on the draft MOU and draft Operating Principles related to policy matters will be shared.
- ☞ Distribute copies of the letter Reclamation received from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.
- ☞ Send out Technical Team meeting minutes within one to two weeks.